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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines ways in which Afghanistan is modernizing its elementary language arts curriculum, changing from the traditional curriculum which stressed rote memorization of academic materials to an approach which encourages active inquiry and problem solving. Initial sections of the paper present background information on Afghanistan and its people and on educational trends in the nation's history. The paper then outlines current goals and objectives in developing language arts curricula and instructional materials, notes the scope and sequence of the language arts program, and describes procedures used in preparing language arts textbooks. Special attention is given to outlining ways in which pupils are taught the two official Afghan languages, Dari and Pashto. The authors present current methodologies for helping pupils to study their first language, then to learn the second official language, and finally to learn a foreign language, usually English. The paper tells how language arts activities are integrated, explains the use of a structured cycle of activities for each text, outlines ways in which materials are field tested and approved, and reports on ways in which school personnel are trained to use the new materials. (GW)

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DEVELOPING A LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN AFGHANISTAN

Wednesday, August 18,1976
1430-1545 hours

The study of any aspect of curriculum in Afghanistan must be viewed within a geographical and historical framework in order to better understand the problems of the development process. Knowledge of the country and particularly its educational background can help the reader overlay recent events upon this spatial and temporal fabric.

The Land and the People

The Republic of Afghanistan, a Moslem nation, is a landlocked country of 250,000 square miles situated in south-western Asia. It is characterized as a land of great geographic extremes and diversity of population and language which make curriculum building on any national scale a tenuous procedure. Afghanistan's 28 provinces contain great, mountain ranges, fertile,green valleys, dry,barren plains and vast deserts. The climate varies considerably from subtropical Jalalabad

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in the east to the year-round, snow-filled, 4000 meter-plus Salang Pass in the Hindu Kush mountains. Temperature and rainfall vary from one part of the country to another and from one year to the next. The overall climate is hot and dry in the summer(with monumental droughts occurring) with cold winters marked by snowfall in the mountains and high plateaus. Water, or the lack of it, is the key to existence in Afghanistan. The problem, historically, has not been one of sufficiency, but of distribution.

About three-fourths of the estimated 19 million people are farmers who raise crops in the mountain valleys. Nomads, who roam the country with herds of livestock, make up about one-sixth of the population. Over 80 per cent of the people speak one or both of the two official languages, Dari (Afghan Persian) and Pashto,both Indo-European in origin. In addition, over 20 other dialects and regional languages are also spoken in various parts of the country.

Although education in Afghanistan is free and the law states that all children between the ages of 7 and 13 should attend elementary school, fewer than fifty per cent were enrolled previously. For those few who managed to complete the first six grades, secondary schools, Kabul University and some other institutions of higher education were available. Most elementary school leavers, however, have not reached the sixth grade and have tended to remain in their local areas, following the customs, language and occupations of their families and generally losing whatever hold they had acquired of the ability to read and write.

This has led, generally, to a multi-lingual, non-literate, non-mobile, inward-looking society engaged in basic-food production extracting a marginal living under difficult circumstances and intent on perpetuating the status-quo. Not the most promising conditions for curriculum or any other kind of innovation.

The Development of Education

When viewing the development of education from an historical perspective, several main phases can be identified, often overlapping and still co-existing today.

The first phase is the traditional type of education, dating from the introduction of Islamic culture to the world over 1200 years ago, and carried on in the home, the mosque and the madrassah. Traditional forms stressed religious education through the teaching of the Holy Koran, reading, writing, some elementary arithmetic skills, and moral instruction on the responsibilities of the individual to society at large. In addition the child was prepared for an occupation, such as reading the Holy Koran, calligraphy or letter writing. Traditional education taught the student to become a good Muslim and a contributing member to a traditional society. One may say that the objectives were essentially religious and moral.

"So-called modern" education was introduced at the beginning of the 20th century with the creation of regular primary and secondary schools and the establishment of the forerunner of the present Ministry of Education. Grades, examinations and disciplinary regulations were set on western models while curricula were prepared with attention given to national needs and tendencies. The general objectives of this period of development were to prepare a relatively small number of students to be literate and enter the secondary school in order to become the administrative personnel required for the creation and perpetuation of a modern state.

Textbooks were written in the two mother tongues, Persian and Pashto and in addition, lessons were taught in theology, the Holy Koran, Tafseer (Commentaries on the Holy Koran), arithmetic, some geometry and calligraphy. Teaching materials for calligraphy (wooden board,

white chalk, reed pen, paper and locally made black ink) are still in general use today, although the ball-point pen has begun to make its mark. The natural and social sciences were gradually added to the curriculum during the middle of this period.In the thirties, forties and fifties, changing conditions mandated revisions in the curricula and texts of all levels of education. Many books printed during this period are still in use.

The beginning of the third phase coincides with the first of the Five-year Plans (1957-1962) which stressed the increase of primary education and literacy for all of the society's members in order to implement reforms in sanitation, agriculture, commerce, construction, industry, etc. The acceptance of planning as an approach in the process of accelerating development and the awareness of the essential role that education had to play in that process truly marks the beginning of "modern" education. By the end of the Second Five-year Plan, a national commission had formulated the goals and objectives which have governed the preparation of instructional materials since that time.

The fourth phase of historical development must date from the creation of the Republic of Afghanistan on July 17, 1973 under the leadership of President Mohammad Daud, and the subsequent publication of the Educational Reform document detailing the philosophical directions for education in the future. These directions are stated in the first paragraph of that document, as follows:

"To bring into existence a modern educational system in accordance with the needs of the time and reflect the aspirations of today's society is a top objective of our young Republican State.Today's society expects the educational system to be a torch to enlighten children in the best way, to be a useful means of strengthening and training the mental, physical and psychological abilities of our youth. Our

educational system must be structured in such a way to really elevate the educational standard of the children of the country, to be effective in the formation of a healthy society consisting of philanthropic, and patriotic individuals observing Islamic principles and civil laws of the country and believing in traditions and historical values of the country, and to be able to spread knowledge through the people with such characteristics."

The Process of Curriculum Development

The development of curricula and instructional materials is a continuous process. Changes are necessary because of new knowledge and skills technology which is constantly being discovered in all subject areas and because of new methods discovered in teaching and learning of these subjects. Also, social, economic and political developments demand that changes be brought.

Curriculum development in the Afghan Ministry of Education can be described in an eight phase process. Briefly stated, these phases are as follows:

First Phase: Educational goals are stated.

Second Phase: A scope and sequence is developed.

Third Phase: Manuscripts are written.

Fourth Phase: Trial materials are approved.

Fifth Phase: Field trials are conducted and evaluated.

Sixth Phase: Materials are revised, approved and printed

Seventh Phase: Supervisors and teachers are oriented to the texts.

Eighth Phase: Texts are evaluated in view to future revision.

Goals and Objectives

Educational goals based on National Goals and objectives of the Educational Reform of January 1975 are stated and then used as a guide to transform them into an approved curriculum. The curriculum, in turn

provides the outline to guide in the creation and production of instructional materials, i.e., pupil's books and teacher's guides for each grade level, i.e. , a scope and sequence.

At the time of the Republican Revolution on July 17, 1973, all previous statements of goals and objectives were reviewed and instructional materials were revised accordingly. This led eventually to the Educational Reform document when curricula and materials were re-interpreted in terms of its stated objectives.

In 1966, during the Second Five-year Plan, a Curriculum and Textbook Project was established under the Elementary Education Department of the Ministry of Education, for the express purpose of developing curricula and their necessary instructional materials.(In 1973, the Project was made a part of the Publications Department which historically has had the responsibility for preparing new textbooks.) Technical assistance for this Project has been provided by Teachers College Columbia University, New York, under a contract with the United States Agency for International Development.

Writing sections were organized within the Curriculum and Textbook Project, corresponding to each subject in the Elementary School course of study. One of the largest sections was and is the Language Arts Section which now consists of 28 members, including one foreign advisor, preparing a total of 64 texts and teachers' guides for grades one through eight. The section is organizaed into five divisions: Dari and Pashto as mother tongues (first language), Dari for Pashto speakers and Pashto for Dari speakers (second language) and English(foreign language).

Each division within the Language Arts Section has had the responsibility of developing a curriculum within its own sphereof operation.

The Scope and Sequence

A sequential program for the introduction of concepts, knowledge and skills is developed for each grade level, based on the curriculum plan developed in the first phase of the process.

The language arts program is of fundamental importance to the elementary school curriculum. Since all books in all subjects are written in both Dari and Pashto, the two official languages, language arts learnings contribute to learning effectiveness in other subject areas. Therefore, the scope and sequence in language arts must become an integrated statement of the total language experience of children in school.

Since each of the two languages is the mother tongue for some children and a second language for others, the language arts program is initially divided into these two major parts: teaching of mother tongue (first language) and teaching of second language. Whether a school is situated in a predominantly Dari-speaking or Pashto-speaking region determines which language is considered the first language and which the second.

Teaching of the mother tongue begins in the first grade and continues throughout the child's school career. The new materials and methods have attempted to integrate the major communication skills into a coordinated series of learning experiences directed towards the development of thinking, reasoning and creative abilities.

Second language teaching, beginning at the fourth grade and foreign language teaching, introduced at the sixth grade level, emphasize the importance of communicating with Afghans in other sections of the country and with the outside world.

Emphasis in all three programs is placed on situations and topics that are immediate and relevant to the child's everyday life. The

scope and sequence for grades one to three includes concepts from social studies, health, science and practical works, presented in a series of related activities and skills. A curriculum based on the "world of work" developed for the upper classes provides children with sufficient information to better understand their relationship to their environment. The activities, skills and learnings introduced in each language program meets its unique needs as well as meeting the needs of one of the other language programs. (This is described more fully in the section on the "Integration of Activities.")

The Preparation of Manuscripts

The scope and sequence developed in the second phase of the development process is used to design basic research, and to create manuscripts for pupil's texts and teacher's guides which will be tried out experimentally in the schools.

Traditional teaching. Previously, elementary textbooks were written by individuals without direct reference to the learners who had to use them or the teachers who had to teach them. There were few teaching instructions available.

The traditional techniques of language teaching were essentially as follows; First, pupils were taught the Dari or Pashto alphabet, an expanded Arabic script, Attention then turned to reading and writing. Reading methods consisted of the teacher reading aloud a sentence or page to the pupils. Next the pupils repeated the sentence or page along with the teacher, and then they chanted the words in unison without the teacher. This process was repeated over and over. Finally the teacher chose a page from the now memorized material and asked a child to read it. If the child had been an attentive pupil, he could "read" the page without looking at the written symbols. The teacher then chose another successful pupil to lead the chant and this was continued page by page,

day by day until some children memorized each page. Reading became simply parroting for memorization.

The old methods made no attempt to guide vocabulary development nor was there any established sequence of skills for the language arts which meant that there was little attempt to teach the basic structure of the language.

Writing was treated as a separate subject, calligraphy. Letters, nonsense syllables, words and sentences -not necessarily correlated with the reading material- were written on the chalkboard or in printed exercise b. :s, and then cop ed over and over by the pupils. Much more attention was paid to proper letter formation in relation to the model given than to the usefulness of the written language as a means of communicating ideas. There was little or no direction for developing creative composition, in fact the basic organizational skills necessary to develop the logical exposition of an idea were not taught.

Little attention was devoted to the skills of speaking and listening except as they related to memorization and recitation. There was no planned activity for creative expression and little was done to help the child in conceptual development.

The new approach. The usual procedure now in preparing textbooks for language arts is that two or three members of the Language Arts Section in each official language are identified to be responsible for preparation of all relevant materials at a particular grade level. Before attempting to translate the scope and sequence into a table of contents, required baseline research is conducted to try to determine a suitable point of departure.

To give one example germane to the development of the first three texts, in- depth studies of children's vocabulary in the two official languages were made to determine the most commonly used words. These

word studies were used to introduce children to a controlled vocabulary. The purpose was to use the most common words in Dari or Pashto in a repetitive pattern during exercises in speaking, listening, reading and writing in order to promote a complete understanding of these words in a variety of contexts. These words served then as a foundation upon which to build the children's language skills.

Following the research phase, the two language groups merge in order to plan a common series of experiences for all Afghan children, no matter in which language they are receiving instruction. Later, when writing, however, the authors create their own stories and skills which grow out of and are unique to their own native language, in order to preserve its flavor, rhythm and structure.

The components of the program. The language arts program, as developed for the elementary schools has three major components; the reading materials, the skill activities and an accompanying teacher's guide. In the first few weeks of the first grade, a readiness book with some charts and teacher's instructions are used, but after this initial period, the first reader(with charts), an accompanying skills text and their teacher's guide are introduced. The second and third grade follow the same pattern. All components for each grade are integrated into on teacher's guide.

In the fourth through eighth grades for all programs, i.e. first, second and foreign language, the pupil's reading materials and skills activities are incorporated into one book with the usual accompanying guide.

Each text contains stories, essays, playlets,riddles and poems of people,places, and events that hope to foster an appreciation of the uniqueness and versatility of Afghan culture. For first language instruction in the first three grades, each book is organized into 20 stories

and four poems. These have been selected with reference to the child's needs and interests within the culture in a progression from the simple to the more difficult.

In grades four through eight the text is organized into five units, each with five stories and a poem built around major topics so that each can be explored in greater depth and with a variety of approaches. The topics and skills of each unit are varied enough to provide broad coverage although some are inevitably repeated in other books of the series with different focus.

Whereas the curriculum in Grades 1-3 centers around the child and moves outward concentrically as his horizons broaden, the curriculum in Grades 4-8 is designed to impart knowledge and skills of a useful and productive nature drawn from the "world of work" as mandated by the Educational Reform. In both the five year second language sequence and three year foreign language program, each book features 30 lessons with topics drawn to meet the same objectives of immediacy, relevancy and appropriateness in terms of Afghan culture.

The new methodology: first language. In studying the mother tongue the pupil begins in the first grade with "readiness" activities which are designed to assure that he is physically and psychologically mature enough to recognize and write language symbols. He is then introduced to written words which are easily understood because they are a part of his spoken vocabulary. These words are introduced gradually so that there is considerable practice in different contexts. First they are made into sentences and then into short stories so that the child learns to read them in context and to recognize them individually. He is asked to use the new words orally and to write them in short sentence/stories reflecting his own experience.

Much interaction takes place between the pupils and the teacher

with both actively involved in each lesson through discussion questions exploring ideas and concepts related to the stories presented. A good balance is kept between oral and silent reading with pupils encouraged to find answers to questions posed. The mechanical chanting of the past has no place in the new program.

Thus, in the new approach, children learn to use word symbols as tools for expressing their own ideas both orally and in writing in ways which can be understood by those with whom they wish to communicate.

The new methodology: second language. Teaching a second language, introduced in the fourth grade, requires use of methods which are different than those used in teaching a first language, although previously the only method used was the usual rote-memorization of pages described earlier. In the first language, children have a spoken vocabulary when they begin school. They have already associated sound symbols with things and experiences in their everyday lives. Learning a second language means associating new sounds with familiar objects, activities and ideas.

Thus, the first steps in teaching a second language involve building up a new spoken vocabulary in which unfamiliar sounds are related to familiar experiences. These are then gradually integrated into the structure of the new language which differs from the native language. The teacher's guide for second language teaching is carefully constructed to show teachers, step by step, how to go about this procedure.

Pupils are encouraged to speak and listen in the second language. As they grow in proficiency they are progressively introduced to related reading and writing learning activities. Gradually more and more first language teaching methods can be used.

The new methodology: foreign language. The Educational Reform stipulates that, beginning in the sixth grade, rather than the seventh as was done in time past, all children are to be introduced to a foreign language. For the vast majority the foreign language will be English.

Learning a foreign language is different from the learning of the mother tongue or the second language. A distinctively new set of sound and written symbols must be learned,which is further complicated in an Afghan setting in that a complete change of direction is also required, that of going from left to right rather than from right to left.All the required activities and methods were previously introduced in the basic English course, but through the attrition of time, present practice has reverted to the same methodology already described in first and second language.

The three year sequence of English language instruction (grades 6-8 is designed to lay a foundation of skills and understandings which can serve as a starting point in developing a means of communication with the rest of the world.This, for Afghan children, will mean an emphasis on reading and writing skills along with those of listening and speaking from the very first lesson.

In the beginning stress is placed on utilising situations that are immediate and relevant to everyday life. To the extent that time will allow, topics will reflect the socially, culturally and economically oriented aims of the Educational Reform.

Teacher's guides for English are written in three languages. The introduction, which contains a detailed step by step approach to all teaching procedures, is written in Dari and Pashto on opposite pages. The day by day structured lesson plans are written in English which will remind the teachers to teach in English and incidentally help their own English competency.

The integration of activities. Activities for all language arts textbooks serve two purposes. First of all they are designed to meet the unique needs of learning and communicating in either the mother tongue, second or foreign language. Secondly they are meant to complemen those activities, skills and learnings which are introduced in one of

the other language programs. Although some overlap is inevitable, the plan generally is to try not to duplicate the teaching of a particlar skill. It may be practiced and reinforced, but not introduced as a major unit of work.

One example would be dramatization. This is introduced as a suggested activity in the first three grades. During the intermediate grades, the emphasis on direct communication and expression is shifted to the second language program through the use of social conversation and situational dialogues. Because of the decrease of timetable allotments for first language, it was felt that other, more important skills should be emphasized. Subsequently this is shifted to the foreign language program which encourages the use of dramatic situation and eventually back to first language by included short plays as part of the reading materials in grades seven and eight.

Another example of interrelatedness would be the inclusion of word building activities in the middle grades first language program. An analysis of both programs turns up examples of work with synonyms, antonyms, suffixing, prefixing, etc. which are borrowed from the other official language in form of cognates which help in building the awareness of borrowed vocabulary.

The work cycle of activities. Perhaps the major form of integration and revolutionary departure from the normal, is the design of the teaching unit and the teacher's guide. Recognizing that many of this generation of teachers in Afghanistan come to the classroom with limited training and background, it was decided at the outset that all teaching instructions, at this stage of textbook development, would be highly structured in order to provide the teacher with a maximum of matter and method to instill greater confidence and hopefully leading to a higher degree of competence.

This has been accomplished through the utilisation of a set work-cycle of activities in each text. In the first three grades a seven day cycle of reading and language development activities was chosen to maximize the learning of the skill strands. The magic number of seven was decided after experimentation with an eight and a nine day cycle. The seven day cycle for grades one to three is as follows:

The first day includes introducing and reading the story, a word study segment, an interpretation activity and a workbook activity in the language skills worktext. Days two to six involve re-reading the story in one or another forms, more word study, a section based on one of the related areas such as science, etc. and another worktext activity Day seven requires re-reading the story for the final time, a word study activity and a creative writing assignment taken from the worktext The cycle of worktext activities generally includes handwriting, languag usage, study skills, related-subject activities, poetry, vocabulary building and creative writing.

In grades four through eight, a six day cycle was chosen to correspond to the six timetabled recitations per week. The activities include reading and re-reading the story, comprehension, interpretation and othe study skills, vocabulary building skills, a language development strand and a composition and creative writing day.

The second language program is based on a five day cycle with each day given over to stressing one of the four communication skills and a fifth day devoted to reviewing the weeks work and a quiz. Within any one day all four skills are generally practiced with emphasis on one as mentioned. Foreign language teaching makes use of a three day cycle which concentrates on practicing each of the four skills during the 35-40 minute alloted on the timetable.

The importance of these pre=selected sets of skills and exercises

is that it allows the teacher to perfect his or her teaching approach over a four or five week period through repetition of a particular kind of activity. Activities are changed frequently enough to avoid boredom on the part of the teacher and the learner, but the emphasis on a particular skill strand on a certain day through out the school year reinforces confidence in changed subject matter.

Two byproducts of this stringent structuring have become apparent over the years. First and more importantly has been the development of an ever increasing corps of Afghan teachers who are becoming aware of the teaching/learning process in addition to building competence in handling specific classroom situations.

Secondly has been the building of a cadre of skilled Afghan writers of language arts texts and teaching materials who are also becoming knowledgable about the psychology of language learning. They have also developed a commonality of vocabulary which permits the writer of the second grade Pashto skills activities to communicate on a professional level with the writer of the sixth grade Dari reader. This means that members of the Language Section are able to seek each others advice in order to provide the flexibility necessary to cope with their task.

The Approval of Materials

As texts are written, they are discussed with senior editors and advisors both in and out of the section. They then are revised on the basis of these discussions before submitting them for review and approval.

The review and approval stage is accomplished by the Ministry of Education through its appointed agent, the review committee. The review committee is composed of personnel drawn from within the section, the Publications Department, the Ministry of Education at large and other educators from the University and Teacher Training Institutions.

They are charged with the responsibility of reviewing the manuscripts and making recommendations on their suitablitiy to be placed as trial materials in the schools selected for field tryouts. Judgements are made concerning authenticity, relevance to Afghan cultural values, validity of content and method and most importantly, "the proper use of language."

The Field Tryout Period

Field trials of approved manuscripts are conducted in laboratory and other cooperating schools. Research is conducted to determine the effectiveness of the materials which serves as a basis for revising and remitting to the Ministry of Education for final approval to print.

As was mentioned earlier, historically, books were written for children without reference to whether or not the children could learn from them. Little attention was given to the modern educational principles which underlie the teaching/learning process. Now, after a text has been approved by the review committee, a full academic year is usually devoted to its trial use to determine its validity.

Trial schools are selected from ordinary schools, designated cooperating schools and laboratory schools. Both experimental and control populations are established before the newly written trial materials are distributed in limited numbers. (Attempts are also made to see that the control population has access to traditional materials.) Teachers who will teach the trial materials are oriented to their use by members of the Language Section and asked to procede with the trial under as close to normal classroom conditions as possible under the circumstances.

Periodic observation and supervisory visits are made by the authors and other Ministry of Education personnel to ensure that the materials are being used as planned and to make on-the-spot judgements for any necessary immediate alterations. After use for one or two terms, the children's achievement is tested for both the control and experimental

populations and assessed in light of the major objective of "how effective are the new materials as opposed to the traditional materials?" Subjective judgements of teachers, pupils, headmasters and supervisors are also collected and analyzed. The sum total of all data is evaluated and recommendations for revision are made in committee accordingly.

Materials are then prepared in their final form and sent back to the Ministry of Education for final approval.

Printing and Distribution of the Materials

After receiving final approval, the materials are made ready to be sent to the press for publication. Printing specifications are determine and calculations are made as to the quantity to print using data supplie by the Department of Planning and the Book Distribution Center. It has been the practice to print a two or three year supply of each text, depending on the policy of repeated usage for any grade level.

In cooperation with the Language Section, the press officials monitor the printing schedule and supervise the conformity of the book with the accepted printing specifications. In the matter of specifications, the language arts texts have required several unique decisions to be made. First of all has been the matter of type size. Since no research exists for children's reading in Arabic script, determination was made to begin with 36 point type and gradually reduce the size in subsequent grades until 14 point was reached by the sixth grade. Various leadings(spacings) were adopted to accomodate the supposed increased visual acuity of more mature children.

A second area of concern has been the choice of type style. Hand written Dari is usually in Nastaliq style, a form of cursive handwriting common in the literature and the sign of one who is literate in Persian. There is no type case available in Nastaliq which means that any work in this style must be hand calligraphed and then printed photo-offset.

Usually printing in Persian is done in Naskh style for which a type case exists. Pashto is also printed and written in Naskh. The decision was made to print all language arts texts in Naskh except where exact models were required in order to teach handwriting and these would be hand calligraphed and photo-offset printed.

A third determination which had to be made on specifications was direction in terms of either a textbook or a worktext approach. Ministry of Education policy has been that books written for the first three grades are to be used for one year and then become the property of the user. This, however, can be a very expensive undertaking, especially considering the large size format of worktext materials which must accomodate the large handwriting models for reed pen users. A recent change in policy has indicated that textbooks in the first two grades will have a life expectancy of two years. This has solved the financial problem but not the textbook versus the worktext problem as it also has been policy that children write in the worktexts. Thesehave already been printed in a several year supply. This problem remains to be resolved.

Lastly has been the matter of textbook illustration. Although there are artists in Afghanistan, few have been trained in the art of book illustration. Therefore, it has been difficult to maintain consistency from page to page and from book to book within a series. Model pictures have now been established for all family members and a very rigorous review of art work is imposed to ensure authenticity and conformity to Afghan culture.

On completion of printing and binding, sufficient copies of the books are reserved for advance usage in teacher education activities, for the use of the section and for other educational purposes. The press then notifies the Book Distribution Center that the books are ready for delivery and distribution to the provinces.

The Orientation of Teachers

Administrators, supervisors and teachers are oriented and trained to use the new materials properly. The present method is carried out on a regional basis as follows:

Before a full workshop for any group is scheduled, a small team from the Materials Orientation Section and Reserach Section of the Department of Publications visit a regional center for two purposes. The first is to arrange with governors of several provinces to hold a seminar for administrators, supervisors and inspectors at some date in the near future. The second is to visit selected schools in the region a a pre-seminar observation of classroom teaching without benefit of orientation. (This is followed up after the seminar and is described in the next phase below.)

At the agreed upon date, a staff made up of experienced members of the writing sections and others from the Department of Publications hold a seminar for all those in the region responsible for overseeing and supervising materials being used in the classroom. They are oriented and taught how to teach the new methods for all textbooks at a particula grade level. Following an intensive period of work, including practice teaching, the trainees hold a seminar for teachers in the provincial center under the watchful eyes of the team from the Department of Publica tions who criticize their performance at the end of each session. After returning to their home areas, the now newly qualified teacher-trainers replicate the seminar experience for more groups of teachers until almos all in any province have been oriented. To date there have been eight such seminars with the remainder planned so that the entire country will eventually be exposed to the newer approaches.

Evaluation and Revision

The teachers use the new materials in the schools and with the

children. Objective and subjective data is collected from the field to determine the materials' effectiveness and usefulness in meeting the objectives stated in the first phase of the development process.

Curriculum development is a continuous process as was mentioned earlier. Included in the procedures for development is the collection of data on the use of the new teacher's guides and pupil's books with a view to revising the material in the future. Such revision is necessary due to the need to include new information concerning content and teaching methods as the world's knowledge increases, to correct deficiencies which show up as the material comes into national use, and to reflect political, social and economic changes which develop as the Republic succeeds in becoming a modern democratic state responsive to the needs of the people.

To aid in this aim, after a reasonable amount of time, a follwo-up team from the Department of Publications visits a region where orientation seminars have been given. This team spot-checks distribution of the textbooks to schools and utilization of the materials in the classroom. Upon their return to the Ministry of Education, they report to the appropriate authorities and to the section which begins the process over again to prepare the second edition.

Summary

The Ministry of Education in Afghanistan is modernizing the nationa elementary school curriculum through the systematic development of new syllabi and the preparation of instructional materials.

The traditional curriculum emphasizes rote memorization of excessively academic materials, detached from the realities of family, community and national life. The new approach encourages active inquiry, problem solving and an exploration of ideas and concepts germane to a modern society.

The new language arts program is of fundamental importance to the new primary curriculum.

Teaching of the child's mother tongue begins in his first year of school. The new methods and materials integrate the major communication skills and direct them towards the development of thinking, reasoning and creative abilities.

The child's second language development is begun in the fourth grade to help people of various language groups in Afghanistan to better understand one another.

Sixth grade children begin a sequence of foreign language teaching which serves as a starting point in developing a means of communication with the rest of the world.

Emphasis in all three programs is placed on situations and topics that reflect the child's everyday life. The scope and sequence for the first three grades also includes concepts from social studies, health, science and practical works which are presented in a series of related activities and skills. The upper classes'curriculum is based on the "world of work" and helps provide children with information to better understand their relationship to their environment.

The activities, skills and learnings introduced in each language program meet the unique needs of that language. Secondly they complement those which are introduced in another program.

For the first time in Afghanistan, teacher's guides have been prepared. Each is carefully constructed to show teachers, step-by-step how to meet the challenges of teaching the new materials.

The new language arts materials for Afghan elementary schools provide learning experiences designed to assist pupils in building better lives for themselves and their families and contributing to the progress of their communities and country.